

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

I am writing today in strong OPPOSITION to SBs 1148 (bear trophy hunting) and 1149 (expansion of Sunday hunting).

Studies have not been able to show any evidence that hunting reduces human-bear conflict. In contrast, public education – for example, teaching people to clean up attractants such as strong smelling food and use bear-resistant trashcans - has proven effective. In fact, Yosemite Park reported a 92% decrease in human-bear conflicts after educational outreach measures had been implemented.

Bears are a slow-to-reproduce species, and hunting may not only cause individual bears to suffer immensely, but may also cause a rapid decline in the population of this keystone species. Hunting female bears leaves orphaned cubs – who are likely to suffer and die as a result of starvation, predators, or exposure. Mother bears care for their cubs for the first year and a half of life. Unfortunately, many abandoned cubs are only a few months old when their mothers are hunted down, and cannot yet care for themselves.

To suggest a recreational hunt as the solution to keep bears out of human backyards, as DEEP has been doing for the past 8 years, is reckless and an abuse of the public trust. The "nuisance wildlife" section of SB 1148 creates a loophole for hunting of bears and bobcats, with unacceptably vague language and subjective standards. The language in SB 1148 that defines when someone can kill a bear is unnecessary: Three reports from the Office of Legislative Research, going back 13 years, attest to the fact that only under limited circumstances can a bear be killed. DEEP can already kill a bear if there exists a public health or safety threat, and the laws have been clear enough to prosecute poaching cases and for DEEP to allow farmers, under very limited circumstances, to kill a bear. Some feel this unnecessary language is designed to provide political cover for DEEP's (and the States Attorney's) botched investigation into the killing of Bobbi the beloved Newtown bear by an off-duty police officer, who shot Bobbi with an AR-15, tampered with evidence, and violated Newtown's local gun ordinance by firing within 500 ft of a building.

The entirety of HB 1148 should be replaced with language offered by the CT Coalition to Protect Bears for HB 5160, which contains real and effective solutions (e.g., feeding ban, grant program to promote community-wide solutions) and also would make it so DEEP would no longer be allowed let orphaned cubs die, as they were poised to do with Bobbi's cubs, who were only 11 and 13 pounds when their mother was brutally killed. Such conduct by DEEP is inconsistent with the values of the Connecticut public, who desire peaceful coexistence per a recent large study comparing DEEP's values against that of the public it purports to serve. Another recent poll found CT residents to be strongly opposed to a trophy hunt of our black bears and that CT residents want humane treatment of orphaned cubs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Julie Stankiewicz  
Manchester, CT